

**SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS**

**Bridgewater School District  
Continuous Improvement Monitoring Process Report 2003-2004**

**Team Members:** Barb Boltjes, Team Leader, Chris Sargent, Education Specialist and Betsy Valnes, Transition Specialist.

**Dates of On Site Visit:** January 20 and 21<sup>st</sup> , 2004

**Date of Report:** February 4, 2004

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This report contains the results of the steering committee's self-assessment and the validation of the self-assessment by the Special Education Programs. The report addresses six principles – General Supervision, Free Appropriate Public Education, Appropriate Evaluation, Procedural Safeguards, Individualized Education Program and Least Restrictive Environment. Each principle is rated based on the following scale:

**Promising Practice** The district/agency exceeds this requirement through the implementation of innovative, high-quality programming and instructional practices.

**Meets Requirements** The district/ agency consistently meets this requirement.

**Needs Improvement** The district/agency has met this requirement but has identified areas of weakness that left unaddressed may result in non-compliance.

**Out of Compliance** The district/agency consistently does not meet this requirement.

**Not applicable** In a small number of cases, the standard may not be applicable for your district/agency. If an item is not applicable, the steering committee should briefly explain why the item is NA. Example – no private schools within the district boundaries.

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**Principle 1 – General Supervision**

General supervision means the school district's administrative responsibilities to ensure federal and state regulations are implemented and a free appropriate public education is provided for each eligible child with a disability. The specific areas addressed in principle one are child find, referral procedures, children voluntarily enrolled by parents in private schools, students placed by the school district, improving results through performance goals and indicators (assessment, drop out, graduation), professional development, suspension and expulsion rates.

## **Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary**

Data sources used:

- Comprehensive Plan
- Yearly child-find results
- Parent survey, referrals, publications of child-find notices
- Cornbelt Educational Cooperative handbook of special education forms

### **Meets requirements**

The steering committee noted district has policies and procedures, which address this issue. The district has identified systems for receiving documented referrals. The district has surveyed groups involved in the child-find activities and reviewed files.

The steering committee reported the district has file reviews, surveys, and documentation supporting their referral procedures as specified through state regulations and school policies.

The steering committee stated the district follows the state policies and procedures and the comprehensive plan regarding the placement and services of students voluntarily enrolled by parents in private schools. The appropriate policies and procedures are in place and would be applied if there were to be a private school within our district.

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The steering committee noted the district did not administer alternative testing in 2000-2001, but after reviewing the data, we administered alternative testing in 2001-2002 and 2002-2003. The district has made progress toward the state's performance goals and indicators.

The steering committee reported the district follows and adheres to the state guidelines for reporting of students suspended, expelled, or dropped out as per the reports required by the state regulations.

## **Validation Results**

### **Meets requirements**

The monitoring team agrees with all areas identified as meeting the requirements for general supervision as concluded by the steering committee.

## **Principle 2 – Free Appropriate Public Education**

All eligible children with disabilities are entitled to a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment. The specific areas addressed in principle two are the provision of FAPE to children residing in group homes, foster homes, or institutions, making FAPE available when a child reaches his/her 3<sup>rd</sup> birthday and providing FAPE to eligible children with disabilities who have been suspended or expelled from school for more than 10 cumulative days.

## **Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary**

Data sources used:

- Table A Suspended/Expelled Students

## **Meets Requirements**

The steering committee stated current practices and past reviews from the state and federal special education monitoring demonstrate the school district provides a free appropriate public education for all children with disabilities. All information is available to the monitoring team to review for assurances of this statement.

The steering committee stated the district has not suspended or expelled any students with disabilities for more than 10 cumulative days in a school year. The district has policies and procedures in place should this occur.

## **Validation Results**

### **Meets requirements**

The monitoring team agrees with all areas identified as meeting the requirements for free appropriate public education as concluded by the steering committee.

### **Principle 3 – Appropriate Evaluation**

A comprehensive evaluation is conducted by a team of knowledgeable staff, which also includes parental input. A valid and reliable evaluation will result in effective individualized education programs for eligible students. The specific areas addressed in principle three are written notice and consent for evaluation, evaluation procedures and instruments, eligibility determination, reevaluation and continuing eligibility.

## **Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary**

Data sources used:

- Table A – General District Information
- District's Comprehensive Plan
- File Reviews
- Surveys

### **Meets requirements**

The steering committee reported 12/12 (100%) of the files reviewed indicated that parental consent for evaluations were obtained. The file reviews also showed that parental input of the evaluation planning was at 6/12 (50%).

The steering committee noted documentation of evaluation planning will include parental input in the future. Policies and procedures pertaining to written notice and informed parental consent are in place and follow both federal and state regulation and procedures.

The steering committee reported policies, procedures and file reviews indicate the IEP team considers all evaluations to determine the proper disability.

### **Needs improvement**

Brigewater school district uses an evaluation team to make decisions regarding evaluations, assessments, and eligibility.

The steering committee stated time lines are followed and students are assessed in the suspected areas of disability.

The steering committee reported one student who moved into the district was already out of compliance for reevaluation, and that parent input into the re-evaluation process was not documented.

## **Validation Results**

### **Meets requirements**

The monitoring team agrees with all areas identified as meeting the requirements for appropriate evaluation as concluded by the steering committee, with the exception of the issues identified under “Out of Compliance”.

### **Needs improvement**

Through student file reviews and interviews the monitoring team agrees that decisions made regarding evaluations, assessments and eligibility need to improve. In addition, the monitoring team validated time lines and assessment in all areas of suspected disability as needing improvement.

### **Out of compliance**

#### **ARSD 24:05:25:02 Determination of needed evaluation data**

As part of an initial evaluation or reevaluation, the individual education program team and other individuals with knowledge and skills necessary to interpret evaluation data, determine what evaluation data is needed to support eligibility and the child’s special education needs.

In all student files reviewed, with the exception of speech/language and developmentally delayed, the monitoring team found students were given a Behavior Assessment for Children. Interviews with special education teachers indicated the Cornbelt Cooperative has directed districts to complete behavior assessment on all students suspected of a disability in which a psychological evaluation is requested. The behavior assessment is completed as a precautionary step in the event of long-term suspension of the student. Students potential concerns in areas such as behavior should drive the selection of evaluation tools. Based on this information, the monitoring team concluded the district does not consider the child’s individual needs when making the determination of needed evaluation data.

#### **ARSD 24:05:25:04.04 Evaluation procedures**

The evaluation team must consider a variety of assessment tools and strategies to gather relevant functional and developmental information about the child, including information provided by the parents. Through the review of eighteen student records, the monitoring team found the district staff gathers data from classroom teachers and completes diagnostic assessment to use as functional information in the evaluation process. During interviews, special education staff reported a lack of understanding concerning reporting functional assessment. The monitoring team noted a written summary of functional information was not consistently included in the evaluation report or in the present levels of performance. The students’ present levels of academic performance, their progress in the general curriculum or development of annual goals and short-term instructional objectives therefore did not link to evaluation.

#### **ARSD 24:05:25:06 Reevaluations**

#### **ARSD 24:05:27:01.03 Transition services**

Transition services are a coordinated set of activities for a student, designed within an outcome-oriented process, which promotes movement from school to postschool activities, including postsecondary education, vocational training, integrated employment ( including supported employment), continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, or community participation. The coordinated set of activities shall be based on the individual student’s needs, taking into account the student’s preferences and interests, and shall include instruction, related services, community experiences, the development of employment and other postschool adult living objectives, and if appropriate, acquisition of daily living

skills and functional vocational evaluation. Through review of eight student files and staff interviews, the monitoring team noted transition evaluations were not administered prior to age 16 to assist in developing transition services and activities.

## **Principle 4 – Procedural Safeguards**

Parents of children with disabilities have certain rights available. The school makes parents aware of these rights and makes sure they are understood. The specific areas addressed in principle four are adult student/transfer of rights, content of rights, consent, written notice, confidentiality and access to records, independent educational evaluation (IEE), complaint procedures, and due process hearings.

### **Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary**

#### **Data sources used:**

- File Reviews
- Surveys
- Comprehensive Plan

#### **Meets requirements**

The steering committee reported file reviews indicated that procedural safeguards were followed for each file.

The steering committee noted the district has policies and procedures in place ensuring that parents fully understand what activity is being sought prior to obtaining consent, as per the regulations and procedures of the federal state and local requirements (page 57 of the comprehensive plan). A parent may revoke consent prior to the action being taken.

The steering committee stated the district has training, policies, and procedures for surrogate parents.

The steering committee noted the district's policies and procedures provide parents with the opportunity to inspect and review all educational records concerning their child in accordance with the provision of a free and appropriate public education and FERPA.

The steering committee stated no complaint has filed against the special education program in the past three years, but has policies and procedures in place if a complaint is filed.

The steering committee reported the district follows federal and state rules and regulations pertaining to due process procedures and its own procedures described in the comprehensive plan starting on page 55.

### **Validation Results**

#### **Meets requirements**

The monitoring team agrees with all areas identified as meets requirements for appropriate evaluation a noted by the steering committee.

## **Principle 5 – Individualized Education Program**

The Individualized Education Program (IEP) is a written document for a child with a disability that is developed, reviewed and revised by the IEP team, which includes the parent. The specific areas

addressed in principle five are IEP team, IEP content, transition components for secondary IEPs, annual reviews, transition from early intervention program, and IEP related issues.

### **Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary**

Data sources used:

- Comprehensive Plan
- File Reviews
- Surveys

#### **Meets requirements**

Bridgewater school district did not invite the student, consider agency participation, and indicate transition as a purpose for the meeting on the prior notice form. Also the district did not complete transition evaluations.

Parent notices for IEP meetings contain all required members. However, the transition students were not invited on the form but were invited personally. Agency representatives were not always invited. IEP'S were always reviewed annually; all but one IEP was held within thirty calendar days of receiving the evaluation results.

Based on the files reviewed, the district/agency has policies and procedures in place to ensure an appropriate IEP is developed and in effect for each eligible student.

#### **Out of Compliance**

Based on the files reviewed, the IEP'S of transition age students contain all required content with the exception of the assessment.

### **Validation Results**

#### **Meets requirements**

The monitoring team agrees with the steering committee data for Principle Five, Individualized Education Program meets requirements except in the area of IEP content. See information under out of compliance.

#### **Out of compliance**

ARSD 24:05:27:01.03 Content of individualized education program

Present level of performance should address student strengths, weaknesses, areas/skills to be addressed, parent input and how the student's disability affects the student's involvement and progress in the general curriculum and must be linked to the goals and objectives. Through the review of student files and staff interviews the monitoring team noted in eighteen student files functional assessment was not included in the present level of performance and therefore was not linked to annual goals and objectives.

Transition services

## **Principle 6 – Least Restrictive Environment**

After the IEP is developed or reviewed, the IEP team must decide where the IEP services are to be provided. Consideration begins in the general education classroom for school age students. The specific areas addressed in principle six are placement decisions, consent for initial placement, least restrictive environment procedures, preschool children, and LRE related issues.

### **Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary**

Data sources used:

- File Reviews
- Surveys
- Cornbelt Cooperative's comprehensive plan

### **Needs Improvement**

The steering committee reports Bridgewater general education staff have not received inservice training on implementing modifications in the regular classroom for special education students. Bridgewater's percentage of students placed in the resource room was higher than the state average for the past three years.

### **Validation Results**

### **Needs Improvement**

During interviews, district staff indicated a need for training on designing and implementing modifications and accommodation. The monitoring team agrees with areas identified as needing improvement for least restrictive environment as concluded by the steering committee.